



EMBASSY OF THE REPUBLIC OF HAITI
WASHINGTON, DC

October 4, 2017

The Honorable Elaine C. Duke
Acting Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Secretary Duke,

Please accept this correspondence in response to the letter from your Department dated September 8, 2017. I want to thank you for your Department's continued collaboration with the Haitian Government in addressing Haiti's Temporary Protected Status (TPS) designation. The Haitian Government is committed to working with the United States to reach a mutually beneficial resolution on this very important issue. Towards that end, the Haitian Government is of the sincere opinion that an extension for an additional eighteen (18) months or a TPS re-designation will serve the shared national interests of both Haiti and the United States.

As the two oldest republics in the Western Hemisphere, we have a long history of collaborating to further our shared values and national interests. The request of the Haitian Government for an extension of the TPS designation for an additional eighteen (18) months is meant to ensure that Haiti is able to adequately move forward with its recovery and redevelopment plan and will not have to rely, over the long term, on the United States for temporary residence for its citizens.

We believe that the best way for us to convey our reasoning behind our request for an additional eighteen (18)-month extension of the TPS designation is to show you the facts on the ground. Therefore, my Government is extending an invitation to host you in Haiti so that you can personally see the efforts underway to address the issues that warranted TPS designation for Haiti in the first place. Moreover, a visit to Haiti would offer you insight on the challenges that we continue to face. We sincerely believe that once you see the conditions on the ground, it will become clear that an additional eighteen (18) months extension or re-designation is in the shared national interests of both Haiti and the United States. We respectfully suggest that the visit occurs no later than the first week of November so that you have sufficient time to assess the situation on the ground before making a decision on TPS for Haitians.

Haiti has undergone a catastrophic and unprecedented series of natural disasters during the last seven years. As you know, the TPS designation for Haiti originated in the aftermath of the January 2010 earthquake that devastated the country, leaving at least 300,000 people dead and more than one million of our citizens internally-displaced. Subsequently, United Nations soldiers

introduced a cholera epidemic that killed thousands of people, sickened over 800,000 and that continues to pose a healthcare risk to our citizenry. Valuable resources initially earmarked for addressing critical earthquake recovery issues had to be re-appropriated to eradicate this epidemic, with limited support from the United Nations, the entity that brought the disease to Haiti in the first place. To add to the devastation, on October 4, 2016, Hurricane Matthew, a Category 4 storm with 145 mph winds and the worst to strike our nation in 52 years, raged through Haiti, destroying over 200,000 homes, wiping out towns, entire villages, and destroying valuable crops. This caused a severe food crisis of unparalleled magnitude in Haiti's history. The economic loss from Hurricane Matthew alone was estimated at 2.8 billion dollars. As a result of these three extraordinary recent catastrophes, in May 2017, we requested an extension of the TPS designation for an additional eighteen (18) months to allow the Haitian Government more time to implement its ongoing recovery and redevelopment plan.

When former Secretary John Kelly announced a six-month extension of Haiti's TPS designation through January 22, 2018, he stated that, "if Haiti is able to continue its pace of recovery from the 2010 earthquake, then a TPS extension past January 2018 may not be warranted." However, despite best efforts and tangible progress, unforeseen natural disasters, including Hurricanes Irma and Maria, have significantly delayed the Government's ability to adequately maintain the pace of recovery from the 2010 earthquake. Therefore, the Haitian Government contends an 18-month extension or a TPS re-designation is necessary for Haiti to continue on the path of progress.

Since our last request, our ongoing efforts to continue to recover from the earthquake and from the ravages of the cholera epidemic and Hurricane Matthew have been hampered by significant setbacks, as Haiti continued to face unforeseeable and daunting challenges. In the past month, both Hurricanes Irma and Maria have caused serious damage in Haiti. A substantial amount of agricultural crops have been destroyed and communities have been flooded, which has resulted in the further displacement of local communities. Additionally, the impact of the most recent hurricanes on neighboring island countries, such as Turks and Caicos, has caused significant harm to the Haitian economy. As you may know, Haiti's economy relies heavily on the contribution of its Diaspora. A substantial proportion of the labor force in many neighboring islands that were affected by Hurricanes Irma and Maria is of Haitian descent. As many of these countries struggle to rebound from these hurricanes, Haitian expatriates working there have found themselves unable to support their families back home, further complicating Haiti's recovery process and delaying the ability of the country to place itself back in the position that it was in prior to the 2010 earthquake.

As noted in your Department's letter, a statutory basis required to designate a country for TPS is that "there has been an environmental disaster resulting in a substantial, but temporary, disruption of the living conditions in the area affected, the country is temporarily unable to handle adequately the return of its nationals, and the country has officially requested TPS designation." Unfortunately, Haiti has had three such major blows since 2010. The detrimental impacts of the recent hurricanes have complicated our ability to recover from the 2010 earthquake, cholera, and Hurricane Matthew within the projected timeline and have exacerbated the situation on the ground, resulting in major disruptions of living conditions in the short-term. Given the current

circumstances on the ground and based on the statutory guidelines, an extension or re-designation of TPS for Haitians is fully warranted and would serve the mutual national interests of both countries.

Back in May, your Department's TPS determination stated that "permitting Haitian nationals to continue residing temporarily in the U.S. is not contrary to the national interest of the United States". Since then, we have not received any subsequent communication from the USG that these conditions changed. Our research, as well as our conversations with U.S. law enforcement and elected officials representing districts and states where Haitian TPS recipients reside, have shown that our nationals have been exemplary law-abiding residents and pose no threat to the security of the United States or its people. Moreover, Haitian TPS recipients have not constituted a financial burden on U.S. taxpayers. Rather, Haitian TPS recipients have made significant economic contributions to their communities here in the United States as acknowledged publicly by Congressional leaders, from the Democratic and Republican side, as well as Mayors, Governors, and business leaders.

At this precarious juncture, an 18-month extension or a TPS re-designation beyond January 2018 is a necessity. Not extending TPS beyond January 2018 would force the Government of Haiti not only to halt its ongoing, short-term redevelopment efforts, but also to focus its limited resources on receiving an influx of citizens. Under these circumstances, we fear that a non-renewal may cause TPS beneficiaries to find alternative, and ill-advised, ways to remain in the United States, and would also embolden trans-national human traffickers and cartels to prey upon this group of vulnerable individuals; such an outcome would not be in the best interests of either of our governments.

In the interim, the Haitian Government is diligently working to put the country back on a trajectory towards a swift recovery. The current leadership in Haiti is in the process of implementing a robust and expansive recovery and redevelopment plan. The plan includes enhancing our infrastructure, increasing private investment and incentivizing economic growth. The redevelopment plan is meant not only to significantly improve the lives of Haitians at home, but also to encourage the return of those living overseas to contribute in the long-term sustainability and economic prosperity of our country.

In the spirit of the long shared-history of our two nations, I thank your Department for the continued dialogue with the Government of Haiti on this important matter. I look forward to hearing back from you regarding a suitable date to host you in Haiti.

Sincerely,



Paul G. Altidor
Ambassador